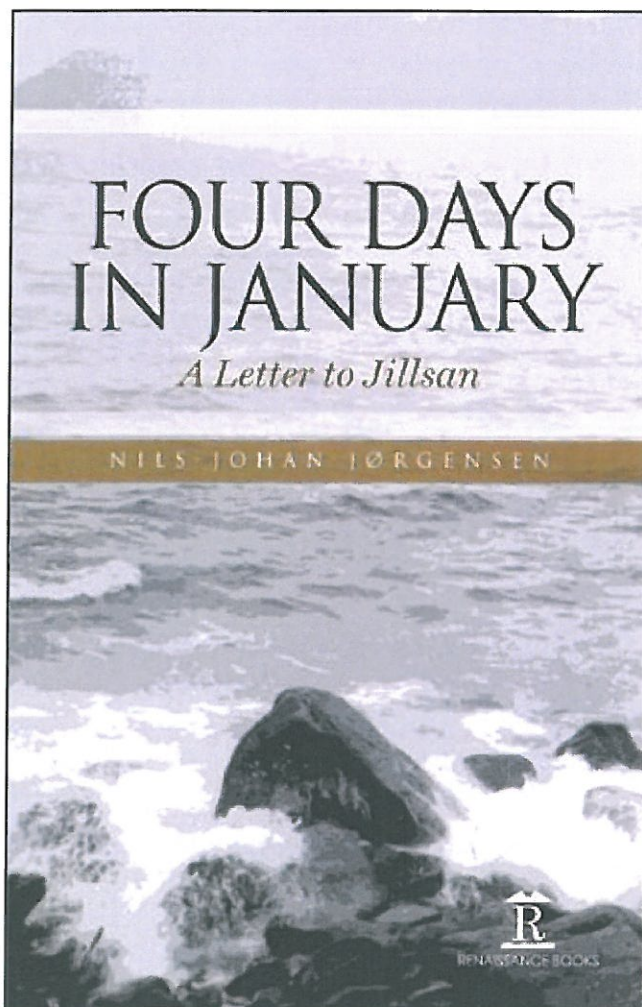


[Book to the Future](#) [Blog : 23 February 2017]

## Four Days in January: A Letter to Jillsan

Nils-Johan Jørgensen

Reviewed by Steve Johnson



*This is a modern tale, a journey of the heart, a road back, revisiting many cities and enduring Eastern and Western sentiments to light and lighten our understanding of life's fleeting appearance.*

It is a way of honouring the life of a loved one, to tell a personal story that reflects the shared, universal truth of the silence of loss from Kakimoto to Goethe and beyond.

Four Days in January is a beautifully told, deeply moving and poignant letter of loss, yet also the celebration of the life of a loved one through allegory, music, poetry and personal records.

Told in letter-form, *Four Days in January* records the story of two lovers and their lives through marriage and parenthood following his diplomatic career spent in different parts of the world, and the role and dedication of the diplomat's wife.

Here is a very open volume that offers an array of inspirational thoughts for anyone facing loss and bereavement.

Having read most of Mr Jørgensen's other books this one, whilst no less readable was an altogether different beast. It is a meditation on life as well as loss. A union of two coming together to live as one, of a love that really shines through, a life lived fully but also a statement on the cruelty of having it cut short.

The beginning takes us through the unfolding tragedy of a life suddenly declining. It is told in an unflinching way and it moved this reader immensely. Despite reading this book in January, I *know* that the opening will be the best one I read all year, which is saying something as I continue to amass great literature.

This personal final letter to his love is an intimate portrait, delicately penned, a chronicle of a shared existence, told through a number of key vignettes. What makes this an intensely moving piece of work is that it is real life, good and bad things happen but it is a reminder to appreciate it every day for what it is. Even the most mundane of times can become something beautiful when viewed the right way.

speeches, diaries and literary quotes are interwoven into the reminiscences, which add more not only to the immersion for the reader but also offer an insight into the world of the diplomat who moves around a lot. The sacrifices the family make are also explored, the beloved places that became home, fondly remembered, the knowledge that contact with friends will end up being long distance as another move beckons. That made worse of course before the advent of Skype and other such inexpensive communication platforms.

Each of the 27 chapters – plus the titular four days in chapter one – adds up to the amount of days in January, which is no coincidence and the book is a story of chapters, of opening and closings. This is a love story, pure and simple, it's the best kind of love story, one that oozes real emotional content and an unflinching honesty. *Four Days in January* makes my book collection richer.